

Al Rawâtib: The Neglected Sunnah

- 8 point Help Guide -



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All praise is due to Allâh. We praise Him and seek His aid and forgiveness. We seek refuge in Allâh from the evil of our own selves and from the evil of our actions. Whomsoever Allâh guides, none can send astray and whoever Allâh sends astray, none can guide.

I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allâh alone, who has no partner. And I bear witness that Muhammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) is His slave and His Messenger. May Allâh send peace and blessings upon him, his family and his Companions until the Last Day.



Introduction

The Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: "The very first thing a servant will be asked about on the Day of Judgement is the salah (prayer). If it is found to be deficient, then it will be said, 'Doesn't he have any optional prayers?' If it is found that he has optional prayers, then they will fill the void, and thus his prayers will be accepted, and the rest of his deeds will also be accepted." [Sunan Tirmidhi, Abu Da'wud, Nasaa'i and others; see Saheeh Al-Jâmi', no. 2020]

Consistently praying the optional prayers throughout the day and night is from the most important of all affairs to the Muslim. This is because they will compensate for the lapses found in your obligatory prayers. The Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) clarified in a narration that a man may pray, but he may only be credited with half of it, another may pray but only be credited with one third of it, and another may pray but only be credited with one fourth of it... [See Saheeh Sunan Abi Da'wud, no. 796]

It often occurs that people have shortcomings in their prayers, while it is obligatory to offer them and complete them perfectly. Do Muslims offer all of your prayers completely and perfectly according to the Sunnah?

We must take care to be consistent in offering optional prayers and also to take care and be consistent in offering the Witr prayer. The Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: "Make the last of your prayers at night, the witr." [Saheeh al Bukhari, no. 953] – and it is not known that the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) missed witr prayer.

Imâm Ahmad said about the one who does not consistently pray the Witr prayer: "He is an evil man; his witness is not to be accepted." - So how could a Muslim not work harder in fulfilling these obligated and recommended prayers that entail immense reward and virtue?

The Rawâtib

The Prophet ﷺ said: "Allâh will build a house in Paradise for whoever is diligent in observing twelve Sunnah raka'at (as follows): 4 raka'at before and 2 after the Dhuhra (Midday) Prayer, 2 after the Maghrib (Sunset Prayer), 2 after the 'Ishaa' (Evening) Prayer and 2 before the Fajr (Dawn) Prayer." [Sunan Tirmidhi, 379 and others; classed Saheeh in al Jâmi', 6183]

'Anbasah ibn Abi Sufyan (رضي الله عنهما) quoted Umm Habibah (رضي الله عنها) as saying "Allâh's Messenger ﷺ said: "A house will be built in Paradise for one who prays twelve raka'at in a day and evening as follows: 4 raka'at before and 2 after the Dhuhra Prayer, 2 after the Maghrib Prayer, 2 after the 'Ishaa' Prayer and 2 before the Fajr Prayer." [Sunan Tirmidhi, 380; he classed it as Hasan and Saheeh (See Saheeh al Jâmi', 6362)]

In another similar narration, the Prophet ﷺ said: "Whoever consistently prays twelve raka'at throughout the day and night, a palace will be built for him in Paradise." [Saheeh Sunan Abi Da'wud, no. 1250]

From these three authentic narrations we understand the importance of these twelve sunnah prayers which are known as the rawatib salah. From the promise of a house being built in Paradise for the one who guards them, it is also crucial to understand that the Prophet ﷺ himself was diligent in performing the rawâtib.

This practise becomes a double reward for Muslims as it guarantees a house in Paradise and it also exemplifies our love for the Prophet ﷺ because we follow and obey him and love what he loved and we perform what he recommended us to, even though it (the rawatib) were not made fard (obligated) upon us.

The 'Asr salah has no routine Sunnah rawâtib. However, it is mustahhab (preferable and recommended) that one prays 4 raka'at before the 'Asr Prayer. Though these 4 raka'at may have lesser reward and importance (in adhering to them) compared to the Sunnan al Rawâtib described above; it is our need to accumulate as much good deeds as possible and take hold of every blessing and Mercy that Allah (سبحانه و تعالى) has provided. These 4 raka'at are the ones intended by the Prophet ﷺ when he said: "May Allâh have mercy on one who prays 4 raka'at before the 'Asr Prayer." [Sunan Tirmidhi, 395, who classed it as Hasan ghareeb; also declared Hasan in Saheeh al Jâmi', 3493]

If these four raka'ats before the 'Asr prayer are not observed, then you have prevented your own self from being included from those whom the Messenger ﷺ supplicated for (i.e. Allâh's Mercy). When you abandon the rawâtib prayers, you have deprived your own self from this virtue. Most of the optional prayers have great virtues attached to them, described by the Messenger ﷺ. How then can Muslims lose out and not be concerned about them?

Allâh (سبحانه و تعالى) says in the Noble Qur'an: **Guard strictly the prayers (five obligatory) especially the middle prayer (i.e. 'Asr). And stand before Allâh with obedience [and do not speak to others during the prayers.]** (Al Baqarah: 238)

Here is a summary of when the 12 Rawâtib salah which are to be prayed:

FAJR -	2 raka'at <u>before</u> Fajr
DHUHR -	4 raka'at <u>before</u> Dhuhur & 2 raka'at <u>after</u> Dhuhur
MAGHRIB -	2 raka'at <u>after</u> Maghrib
'ISHA -	2 raka'at <u>after</u> 'Isha

The four raka'at of the rawâtib salah are to be prayed two units at a time according to the strongest evidence and most correct scholarly opinion.

How to Accommodate the Rawâtib Salah in our Daily Lives

Within many of the fast-paced societies of today, Muslims are losing some of their sense of proportion. Along with this, they are losing the means in attaining so much reward; most of which comes with very little effort. It is indeed a favour upon favour and a blessing upon blessing that Allâh (سبحانه و تعالى) has created infinite means to His Mercy and ways to be rewarded. Every aspect of Islâm contains within it, ways to achieve this.

The Lord of the Worlds provides opportunities for the Muslim to earn His Forgiveness and continuously work goodness. As humans we always look for a good deal in life; something that is profitable. Allâh (سبحانه و تعالى) is giving us something far greater than a mere worldly reward; rather He is offering something beyond anything that man can offer. From the moment we awake to the moment we sleep, every moment has the potential to become a means of reward and forgiveness for us if we decide to utilise them!

If we take a look at the 5 daily fard salah (obligated prayers) as an example, we can approximate that they do not take more than 40 or 50 minutes in total. Can you imagine the Wisdom and Mercy of Allâh (سبحانه و تعالى) who has provided 24 hours in a day and from these 24 hours, He has obligated the pillar of salah, which time-wise, translates to less than a hour in a day!?

If every 2 raka'at of Sunnah rawâtib takes 5 minutes; the total 12 raka'at of rawâtib salah would take 30 mins. Again, can you further ponder over what Allâh (سبحانه و تعالى) has promised us through the words of the Prophet ﷺ when he said: "Allâh will build a house in Paradise for whoever is diligent in observing 12 Sunnah Raka'at..." – For spending such a small amount of time before or after a specific fard salah, we are promised something which is far more precious and ever-lasting than anything we will ever accomplish or achieve in this life.

Inclusive of the fard salah, the total time spent in a 24-hour day on both, the fard and the rawâtib salah would equate to approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes at the most for a Muslim. These 80 minutes become pretty minuscule from the 1,440 minutes that make up a day. Yet the significance of the time we spend in salah is the most important for a Muslims.

Praying the prescribed rawâtib needs to be performed at the prescribed times. Here lies the key challenge which a lot of Muslims need to address; especially those who work regulated hours and those who are students at schools and colleges etc. So how can we overcome these challenges? Here are 8 points that have been devised and adapted from various sources to help Muslims perform salah on time and make it possible to pray the rawâtib as well – (you may add other workable ideas to this list for everyone's benefit):

One

Having the Tawakul (a sincere reliance) in Allâh (سبحانه و تعالى). It is indeed a missing vital ingredient in the lives of some Muslims where they relentlessly attempt to achieve something without realising that everything is in the Hands of Allâh (سبحانه و تعالى) and He alone can either make it easy or difficult for us to tread the path of our choosing. Our duty is to safeguard our obligations toward Him, make du'a to Him, do our best and leave the rest to Allah (سبحانه و تعالى).

Allâh (سبحانه و تعالى) says in the Noble Qur'an: **And whosoever fears Allâh and keeps his duty to Him, He will make a way for him to get out (from every difficulty). And He will provide him from (sources) he never could imagine. And whosoever puts his trust in Allah, then He will suffice him.** (At Talâq: 2-3)

If Allah helps you, none can overcome you; and if He forsakes you, who is there after Him that can help you? And in Allah (Alone) let believers put their trust. (Aal Imrân: 160)

He (سبحانه و تعالى) also says: ... and whosoever fears Allah and keeps his duty to Him, He will make his matter easy for him. (At Talâq: 4)

He (سبحانه و تعالى) also says: **But whoever puts his trust in Allah, then surely, Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise.** (Al Anfâl: 49)

Whoever fears Allâh (سبحانه و تعالى) and keeps his duty towards Him, Allâh will show him a way out and make things easier for him. When Allâh knows that a Muslim is keen to do the obligatory actions, He will help him. The one who entrusts Allah (سبحانه و تعالى) does so in the certainty that what Allah decrees is best for them, even if it is apparently the opposite of what they believe to be good. Such a person is content with the decrees of Allah as they know whatever is decreed is best for them, whether the benefit is apparent or not. We need to increase our tawakul in Him (سبحانه و تعالى).

Two

Understanding the virtues of salah and the enormity of either missing or delaying the salah from its proper time. With regards to the latter, the Prophet ﷺ said: "Between a man and shirk [associating others with Allâh] and kufr there stands his giving up prayer." [Saheeh Muslim, 82]

The Prophet ﷺ also said: “The covenant that stands between us and them is prayer; whoever gives up prayer is a kâfir.” [disbeliever].” [Musnad Imâm Ahmad as well as the four Sunan; classed Saheeh]

There statements were also narrated from the Sahabah (Companions of the Prophet) - The great Tâbi'ee 'Abdullah ibn Shaqeeq al 'Aqeeli said: “The Companions of the Messenger of Allâh ﷺ did not think that omitting anything constituted kufr apart from prayer.”

Allâh ﷺ says in the Noble Qur'an: **So woe unto those performers of Salat (prayers) (hypocrites). Those who delay their Salat (prayer from their stated fixed times).** (Al Ma'un: 4-5)

The scholars are agreed that it is forbidden to delay prayer until the time for prayer is over, without a legitimate excuse. Missing the time for prayer means leaving the prayer until the time is over and one has not prayed. This is a major sin, unless that is for a legitimate excuse.

Allâh ﷺ says in the Noble Qur'an: **Verily, As-Salât is enjoined on the believers at fixed hours.** (An Nisâ': 103) - Not performing prayers takes the person out of the fold of Islam, and delaying them from their fixed times is a sign of hypocrisy. We need to be careful because studying or working is not more important than prayers. Allâh ﷺ will not ask a person on the Day of Judgment if he neglected his work or studies, but He will ask him if he neglected his salah..

With regard to delaying prayer, this may refer to two things:

1. Delaying prayer until the time for that prayer is over.
2. Delaying the prayer until the end of the time for that prayer.

It is permissible to offer a prayer at the end of its time, because of the hadeeth from Abu Moosa al-Ash'ari (رضي الله عنهما) where someone came to the Messenger of Allâh ﷺ and asked him about the times of prayer... and the Prophet ﷺ explained to him the beginning and end of the time for each prayer, and said, “The time is between these two.” [see Saheeh Muslim, 614]

But if delaying the prayer means that one will miss out on praying in congregation and will pray it alone at the end of its time, then it is forbidden because it means not praying in congregation, so long as one does not have an excuse for not praying in congregation.

It is better to perform the prayer at the beginning of its time, except for 'Isha' prayer and Dhuhr prayer when the sun is at its hottest; in these cases it is better to perform them at the end of their allotted times.

See appendix 1 (Praying on time)

Three

Muslims must organise their time at work or in school in a way that will not interfere with their performing the fard salah on time. Since it is not permissible to delay the prayers beyond its time, it becomes prudent to work out an agreement on a suitable solution with the work management or school administration, even if that

causes you some difficulty. This could include either working extra hours, making up the time before or after shifts or simply not taking a lunch break etc.

You must try hard to solve this problem with wisdom. It will not take you more than ten minutes to perform each salah. It has been the case where you may not imagine asking permission for ten minutes from work or feel uneasy; however what would happen if you wanted to go to the bathroom? They would never stop you from doing that, even though that may take the same amount of time or more.

Four

In a number of Western countries, there are laws that protect the rights of minorities to practise their religion. These laws oblige the management to accord the religious needs of those who work for them. You can find out if there are such employment laws where you work.

In America for example, when an employer's workplace policies interfere with its employee's religious practices, the employee can ask for something called a "reasonable accommodation." A "reasonable accommodation" is a change in a workplace rule or policy to let you engage in a religious practice. Your employer is required to provide you with such an accommodation unless it would impose an undue hardship on the employer's business. This means the employer is not required to provide an accommodation that is too costly or difficult to provide. The key is that you should work closely with your employer in finding an appropriate accommodation.

Whether your employer can accommodate your religious practices will depend upon the nature of the work and the workplace. Usually, your employer can allow you to use lunch or other break times for religious prayer. If you require additional time for prayer, your employer can require you to make up the time. I understand further information can be gained from Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

Five

If a student needs to go to the bathroom urgently during class, what does he do? The obvious answer is that he asks the teacher for permission and leaves the room. Praying on time is more important than answering the call of nature. We would like to remind you of the following points:

Firstly, the times for prayer in Islam are long and this is another Mercy from Allâh (سبحانه و تعالى). For example, the time for the Dhruh – which is the prayer that usually comes during the school day; does not end until the time for 'Asr (mid-afternoon) prayer begins, so you can pray Dhruh from the time when the sun is at its zenith until the time when the shadow of an object is equal to its length. This time is a period of hours, not minutes, so there is bound to be an opportunity to pray within this long period of time.

Secondly, there are usually breaks between classes; even if the break is only five minutes, you can make the most of it. There are also breaks for recess and for lunch during which you could pray. Otherwise you could pray after school is over and before the time for the prayer ends. Or you could ask the teacher for permission to leave before the class finishes so that you can go and pray. The info mentioned in point two may also be applicable to Muslim students; therefore you can try and take advantage of these laws if they exist.

Whatever the case may be whoever fears Allâh (سبحانه و تعالى) and does his duty towards Him, Allâh will show him a way out and make things easier for him. When Allâh knows that a Muslim is keen to do the obligatory actions, He will help him. We need to increase our tawakul of Him (سبحانه و تعالى).

Six

Knowing the correct shari' rulings for combining or shortening the salah; here are two brief overviews:

- A. Know when you can and cannot join or combine fard salah. You should note that the prayers which are allowed to be joined according to sharee'ah are Dhuhr and 'Asr, or Maghrib and 'Isha'. These are the combinations mentioned in sharee'ah. You can join Dhuhr and 'Asr, at the time of either of them, and you can join Maghrib and 'Isha' at the time of either of them, depending on what is easier for you.

It is narrated that the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) used to join Maghrib and 'Isha' prayers because of rain. Sa'eed ibn Jubayr narrated that Ibn 'Abbaas (رضي الله عنهما) said: The Messenger of Allâh (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) joined Dhuhr and 'Asr, and Maghrib and 'Isha' in Madeenah at times other than times of fear or rain. I said to Ibn 'Abbaas: Why did he do that? He said: So that his 'ummah would not be faced with hardship. [Saheeh Muslim, 705]

The fact that Ibn 'Abbaas (رضي الله عنهما) stated that it was not because of fear or rain indicates that these are two of the reasons for joining prayers. Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah said in his majmoo' fatâwa: "It is permissible to combine the two evening prayers because of rain, strong cold winds or muddy conditions and the like, and this is the more correct scholarly view."

See appendix 1 (Reasons which make it permissible to join/combine or shorten prayers)

- B. Know when you can and cannot shorten fard salah. Travelling is a reason which permits the four-raka'at prayers to be shortened to two raka'ats, evidence is to be found in the actions of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ): When he travelled, he would pray two raka'at. It was not narrated from him that he ever prayed four raka'ats whilst travelling, rather during all of his journeys, long and short, he would pray two raka'ats.

With regard to the consensus of the Muslims: this is something which is a well-known and well-established part of the religion, as Ibn 'Umar said: "I prayed behind the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmaan, and they never prayed more than two raka'ats when travelling." And the Muslims are agreed upon that.

See appendix 2 (Minimum distance to allow shortening prayer)

Seven

Muslims must remember that the benefits of increased faith in their heart as a result of praying on time will compensate for any difficulties you encounter. Perceived hardships will turn to joy because we understand that doing something for the sake of Allâh (سبحانه و تعالى) and seeking His pleasure has unique rewards.

Work or schooling is not an excuse for delaying prayer unless there are extreme and exceptional circumstance where one cannot be excused (i.e. student taking an exam or a doctor who is performing surgery - Matters that are deemed critical). Therefore every accountable Muslim, man and woman is obliged to perform the salah on time as much as they can.

Eight

After exhausting all avenues in safeguarding the fard salah and if it becomes too difficult to resolve this problem at work, then it is necessary that you make the intention to look for another job which will not conflict with your establishing regular prayer.

Allâh (سبحانه و تعالى) says in the Noble Qur'an: **Men whom neither trade nor sale (business) diverts from the remembrance of Allâh (with heart and tongue) nor from performing As-Salaah (Iqaamat as-Salaah) nor from giving the Zakaah. They fear a Day when hearts and eyes will be overturned (out of the horror of the torment of the Day of Resurrection).** (An Noor: 36-37)

If you cannot find any other job and you will be adversely affected by your leaving this job, then there is the hope that this may be regarded as dharoorah (necessity) that will permit you to combine your prayers. And Allâh knows best.

And indeed only Allâh's Help is sought in correcting the affairs of Muslims and guiding us to success.

Disclaimer: The English translation of the meanings of the Qur'ân is taken from 'The Noble Qur'ân' by Dr. Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali and Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan.

Please note that you can not and should not use non-Arabic translations of the Qur'ân and the Hadeeth as a replacement or substitute for the original Arabic. Gross misunderstandings usually arise from lack of language skills as well as knowledge of history and context from amongst other things.

Appendix 1

Praying on Time

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allâh have mercy on him) said:

It is better to do the prayer at the time required in sharee’ah. Hence the Prophet ﷺ said, answering the one who asked him which deed is most beloved to Allâh, “Prayer done on time.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 527; Muslim, 85. He did not say, prayer at the beginning of its time. That is because the prayers include some which it is Sunnah to pray sooner and some which it is Sunnah to pray later. It is Sunnah to pray ‘Isha’ later, after one-third of the night has passed. Hence if a woman is at home and asks which is better for me, to pray ‘Isha’ when I hear the adhaan or to delay it until one-third of the night has passed? We say, it is better to delay it until one-third of the night has passed, because the Prophet ﷺ delayed one night until they said, “O Messenger of Allâh, the women and children have fallen asleep,” so he went out and led them in prayer, and said, “This would be its time, were that not too difficult for my ummah.” So if a woman is in her house, it is better for her to delay it.

Similarly, if it so happens that some men are travelling and they ask whether they should pray ‘Isha’ sooner or later, we would tell them that it is better for them to delay it. Similarly if a group goes out for a trip and the time for ‘Isha’ comes, is it better for them to pray ‘Isha’ sooner or later? We say that it is better for them to delay it if that will not cause them any hardship.

In the case of the other prayers it is better to pray them sooner unless there is a reason for doing otherwise. So Fajr should be prayed sooner, Dhuhur should be prayed sooner, ‘Asr should be prayed sooner and Maghrib should be prayed sooner, unless there is a reason for doing otherwise.

Such reasons include the following :-: If it is intensely hot, then it is better to delay Dhuhur prayer until it cools down a little, i.e., until it is nearly time for ‘Asr, because it cools down a little when it is nearly time for ‘Asr. When it is intensely hot, it is better to pray when it is cooler, because the Prophet ﷺ said: “When it is intensely hot, then wait until it cools down before you pray, for intense heat is from the breeze of Hell.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 537; Muslim, 615.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allâh be upon him) was on a journey and Bilaal stood up to give the call to prayer, and he said, “Wait until it gets cooler.” Then [Bilaal] stood up to give the call to prayer, and [the Prophet ﷺ] said, “Wait until it gets cooler.” Then [Bilaal] stood up to give the call to prayer, and [the Prophet ﷺ] gave him permission to do so. Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 629; Muslim, 616.

Another reason is if it will be possible to pray in congregation at the end of the time but not at the beginning, in which case delay is preferable. For example, if a man is outside the city when the time for prayer comes, and he knows that he will reach the city and catch up with the congregation at the end of the time for prayer, is it better for him to pray when the time for prayer comes, or to delay the prayer until he reaches the congregation?

We say that it is better for him to delay the prayer until he catches up with the congregation; we say that it is even obligatory for him to delay in this case, so that he can catch up with the congregation. [Fataawa Arkaan al-Islam, p. 287] - See also ‘al-Mawsoo’ah al-Fiqhiyyah, 10/6’.

Appendix 2

Reasons which make it permissible to join or shorten prayers

The reasons which make it permissible to join prayers are broader than those which make it permissible to shorten them. Joining prayers is permissible for every traveller, and for the non-traveller if it is too difficult for him to offer every prayer on time, such as one who is sick, or if there is rain, or he is busy with some work that he cannot delay in order to pray, such as a student taking an exam or a doctor who is performing surgery etc. - Matters that are deemed critical.

With regard to shortening prayers, that is only permissible when travelling. Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allâh have mercy on him) said in Majmoo' al-Fatâwa (22/293):

The reason for shortening prayers is travelling only, and it is not permissible in situations other than travelling. As for joining prayers, the reason for it is need and excuses, so if a person needs to he may join both shortened and full-length prayers whilst travelling, and he may join prayers when it is raining and so on, or because of sickness and the like, and for other reasons, because the purpose behind it is to spare the ummah hardship. End quote.

Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymeen (may Allâh have mercy on him) said in al-Liqâ' al-Shahri (60/11):

Joining prayers is broader in scope than shortening them, i.e., the reasons for doing so are more numerous.

In a similar case, Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azeez ibn Baaz said: "if a pilgrim does 'Umrah in Ramadan and comes from a far land such as Najd or elsewhere, then he is a traveller and he may break the fast on the road, whether he is coming from Riyadh or al-Qaseem or Haa'il or Madeenah. He may break the fast on the road and in Makkah. But if he has decided to stay for more than four days, then when he reaches Makkah, to be on the safe side he should fast and it is better to fast, because the majority of scholars are of the view that if he has made a firm decision to stay for more than four days, then he must offer the prayers in full and not break the fast."

But if he has decided to stay for two or three or four days and no more, then he may break the fast or he may fast, he may shorten the four-raka'at prayers to two raka'ats, or he may offer the prayers in full with the people. If he is alone, he should pray with the congregation, but if there are other people with him, he has the choice: if he wishes he may pray two raka'ats with the people who are with him, or if they wish they may pray four raka'ats with the people in congregation. If their stay is more than four days, then they should fast and offer the prayers in full, according to the majority of scholars."

Again we find that travel is a reason that not only allows for shortening of prayer, but also allows for a fasting person to break his fast

Appendix 3

Minimum distance to allow shortening prayer

The majority of scholars (al-jumhoor) comprising the Maliki's and the Shafi'i's and the Hanbali's have taken the opinion that the recognised distance for one who has undertaken its travel in shortening the prayer is four burud (an antiquated unit of distance), which is two average day's travel by heavily-loaded camels (equivalent to 88.7 km in distance). Among what they have quoted as evidence is what was authentically narrated by Ibn Umar and Ibn Abbaas (رضي الله عنهما) that they used to shorten the prayers and break fasting at a distance of four BURUD. This quoted distance is approximate and not exactly limited as per the majority of scholars, and thus what is slightly less is exempted as well.

Some scholars including ibn Qudamah and Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah and his pupil Ibn al Qayyim have taken the opinion that all that is referred to as travel in practice and in language, and requires preparation of provisions as well as rest and similar things, falls under the licenses of shari'a such as the shortening of the prayer and breaking the fast of Ramadan. Their pretext and justification is the generalization in the wording referring to the shortening of the prayer as it appears in the Qur'an and sunnah, as in the example of An-Nisâ', verses 4:101-102:

"When you travel through the earth, there is no blame on you if you shorten your prayers, for fear the unbelievers may attack you: for the unbelievers are unto you open enemies. When you (O Messenger) are with them, and stand to lead them in prayer, let one party of them stand up (in prayer) with you taking their arms with them; when they finish their prostrations, let them take their positions in the rear. And let the other party come up - which has not yet prayed - and let them pray with you, taking all precautions, and bearing arms: the Unbelievers wish, if you were careless of your arms and your baggage, to assault you in a single rush. But there is no blame on you if you put away your arms because of the inconvenience of rain or because you are ill; but take (every) precaution for yourselves. For the unbelievers Allâh has prepared a humiliating punishment."

And in the following hadeeth: Ya'la bin Umayah said: I said to 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab "Verily Allâh has said '... if you shorten your prayers, for fear the unbelievers may attack you...' and now the people feel secure." 'Umar said, "[Indeed] I wondered the same thing you are wondering, so I mentioned it to the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and he said '[It is] a charity that Allâh has bestowed upon you so accept His charity.'" [Sunan Tirmidhi, no. 2960; classed as Hasan Saheeh]

Umayah ibn Abdullah ibn Khaalid ibn Asid said to Ibn 'Umar, "How can you shorten the prayer when Allâh the Almighty has said, 'there is no blame on you if you shorten your prayers, for fear...', " so Ibn 'Umar said, "O son of my brother, verily the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) came to us when we were misguided, so he taught us, and among what he taught us was that Allâh the Almighty has ordered us to pray two raka'at during travel." [Sunan Tirmidhi, no. 453]

The ayah expresses the permission for shortening the prayer for one who travels without specifically restricting the distance. Thus the Qur'an and sunnah mention "travel" and do not differentiate a particular travel from another, and as such if one travels via air for one hour without any burden or hardship it would be permissible for him or her to shorten the prayer and break the mandatory fast. In fact, this is the most viable opinion, unless for a particularly case there is confusion as to whether it is commonly regarded as travel or not, in which case one falls back to the opinion of the majority of scholars (al-jumhoor) (regarding the minimum required distance).